

7/14/67

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BACK BAY

Status Report

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The Back Bay Project was originally one of the 10 GNRP areas designated in 1960 for overall renewal planning. The area covered was bordered by Storrow Drive, Arlington St., N. Y. & N.H. RR (South End Project), and Massachusetts Ave. The GNRP studies completed in March 1965 showed the area not to be seriously blighted. In addition, the assets and location of the area were such as to provide opportunities for private reinvestment without the need for Federally assisted Urban Renewal.

Noting that there was strong support from Back Bay organizations to continue with more detailed planning studies the GNRP report recommended that further planning be undertaken on a cooperative basis between the BRA, the City, the Back Bay Council, and the Back Bay Planning and Development Corporation.

The Back Bay Planning Program was outlined and organized through a Memorandum of Understanding between the BRA, the City, and the Back Bay organizations. Initially some seven consultants were retained each with their own specialty relating to planning, ^{zoning,} urban design, economics, traffic, sub-soil engineering, and cost estimating; subsequently a landscaping architect was also retained. The Back Bay Corporation set up a budget of \$200,000 to which was added an amount of \$50,000 from the BRA as its contribution in the form of contracts with two of the consultants, Adams,

1. Introduction

2. Methodology

The first part of the study focuses on the theoretical framework and the methodology used. The second part presents the results of the study, which are discussed in the third part. The fourth part concludes the study and provides some final thoughts.

The study is organized as follows. In the first section, we introduce the topic and the research objectives. In the second section, we describe the methodology used in the study.

The results of the study are presented in the third section. We discuss the findings and their implications in the fourth section. Finally, we conclude the study and provide some final thoughts in the fifth section.

Howard & Oppermann, and von Moltke, Chapman & Goyette.

The planning program was divided into two phases. The first phase leading to a ^{preliminary} ~~conceptual~~ plan was completed in July 1966. It covered existing conditions and presented basic objectives for review and approval before more detailed planning was undertaken under Phase II. In brief, these objectives were to discourage further expansion of institutional uses, encourage new residential construction for upper and middle income families, including opportunities for high rise residential development ^{and new commercial development.} ~~It also pro-~~ posed better traffic access to and circulation within the Back Bay while at the same time discouraging excess traffic through the residential areas. ^{The plan} It also proposed the strengthening of the area's architectural assets through design control, including sign control, code enforcement, landscaping of public areas, and the creation of a new focus at Copley Square.

Upon approval of the preliminary plan by the Back Bay Council certain plan recommendations which had received general support were put into effect. During 1966 the zoning code was amended to further restrict the expansion of institutional uses by making dormitories a conditional use and fraternities a forbidden use. In addition, a design control bill to establish the Back Bay Architectural Commission was enacted under the sponsorship of Rep. Sears and Sen. Ames. This legislation, which I believe is unique, will help to insure that all new construction and alterations in the Back Bay residential area will be in keeping with the area's distinctive

architectural character. The area presently covered by this control includes Beacon St., Marlborough St., and Commonwealth Ave. If proved successful it is contemplated to extend the area to also include Newbury St. which is also architecturally distinctive.

Early in 1965 the Copley Square competition was successfully concluded with the award of 1st prize to Sasaki, Dawson, DeMay Associates, Inc., of Watertown. The design drawings for the new square are to be completed this month with the construction of landscaping improvements for this historic space to be undertaken before the Fall of 1967. The total cost is \$550,000 of which one-half is anticipated to be reimbursed by the Federal Government under the Urban Beautification Program.

In 1967, a proposal to create a new pedestrian mall on Dartmouth St. connecting Copley Square with Commonwealth Ave. ^{and Beacon St} and, ultimately, the Charles River Esplanade, was carried forward. The Traffic and Parking Department undertook a test to change the direction of traffic on Dartmouth St. and Exeter St. to one way northbound and one way southbound respectively; the test has proved to be successful. This has opened the way for final approval by the PIC to reduce the width of Dartmouth St. and allow the pedestrian mall to be constructed utilizing in part funds from the Public Works Department and the Parks Department. This improvement is anticipated to get under way the Summer of 1968 in coordination with a new MBTA kiosk for Copley Square to be located at the entrance to the Dartmouth St.

Mall. Completion of construction, to include paving of the Mall and tree planting, is projected for the Spring of 1969.

Detailed plans for the improvement of Commonwealth Ave. Mall were also prepared under this program and through the use of private funds contributed by Back Bay organizations a landscape consultant has prepared detailed drawings for use by the Parks Department for the first segment of the Mall to be improved at Arlington St. It should be noted that a portion of City expenditures for improving both the Dartmouth St. and Commonwealth Ave. Malls will be eligible for 50% reimbursement through the Federal ~~Government under the~~ Urban Beautification Program.

Recently, a proposal by University of Massachusetts to locate a 30-acre campus in Back Bay was given wide publicity. I believe I successfully discouraged this move which would have directly and indirectly inhibited some \$150 million in private tax-paying development anticipated in the near future.

The final reports on the Back Bay Plan are scheduled for completion by the consultants in August 1967. Following presentation of the Development Plan to the Back Bay Council and local organizations, it will be publicly released and transmitted to the Mayor and City Council.

The Development Plan is based upon a ten year forecast of the social, economic, and physical changes which may reasonably be expected in the Back Bay. It makes recommendations for public policy, community and private action. It will serve to guide changes in the area most

appropriate to solve its problems and achieve optimum potential growth through private investment estimated to amount to \$300 million in the next decade.

M. Wenniger
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